

OPENING OF THE SOCIETY OF ARTS.

HISTORY OF BOOKBINDING.

Nov. 10.—Mr. Thos. Webster, F.R.S., in the chair. The secretary read an address on the opening of this the 24th session of the society, and stated, that the council had great pleasure in congratulating the members on the prosperity of the society and its prospects of increasing usefulness. It referred to the changes recently introduced into the constitution of the society and the great general benefits which had resulted therefrom. It next alluded to the suggestion which had been made at an early period by H.R.H. the President, indicating one direction in which the arts and manufactures of England admitted of advancement, and eminently required improvement and the success which had attended the offering of large premiums for the production of improved specimens, uniting decorative art with manufacturing skill, and the ready sale which manufacturers found for their improved productions. It then referred to the efforts of the past session to establish an annual exhibition of British manufactures, and announced the intention of the council to open the second exhibition in February or the beginning of March next, after which, in June, the exhibition of the paintings by W. Mulready, R.A., is to take place. The address concluded by stating that H.M. the Queen had, at the request of the Prince Consort, granted to the society a Royal Charter of Incorporation, bearing date 10th of June last.

Mr. J. Cundall read a paper "On Ornamental Art as applied to Ancient and Modern Bookbinding." He commenced by stating, that the earliest records of bookbinding prove that the art has been practised for nearly 2,000 years, previous to which time books were written on scrolls of parchment. Some inventive genius, however, to whom the Athenians erected a statue, at length found out a means of binding books with glue. The rolls of vellum, &c., were cut into sheets of two and four leaves, and were then stitched somewhat as at the present day. Then came the necessity for a covering. The first book-covers appear to have been made of wood, probably merely plain oaken boards, which were afterwards succeeded by valuable carved oak bindings; these were followed by boards covered with vellum or leather, and specimens of such of great antiquity still exist. The Romans carried the art of bookbinding to a considerable perfection, and some of their public officers had books called Diptychs, in which their acts were written. An old writer says, that about the Christian era the books of the Romans were covered with red, yellow, green, and purple leather, and decorated with silver and gold. In the thirteenth century some of the Gospels, Missals, and other service books for the use of the Greek and Roman churches, were covered in gold and silver; some were also enamelled and enriched with precious stones and pearls of great value. In the fifteenth century, when art was universal, such men as Albert Durer, Raffaele, and Giulio Romano decorated books. The use of calf and morocco binding seems to have followed the introduction of printing, and there are many printed books bound in calf with oaken boards, of about the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries; these are mostly stamped with gold and blind tools. The earliest of these tools generally represent figures, such as Christ, St. Paul, coats of arms, &c., according to the contents of the book.

In the reign of Henry the Eighth, about 1538, Grafton the printer undertook to print the great Bible, for which purpose he went to Paris, there not being sufficient men or types in England; he had not, however, proceeded far before he was stopped in the progress of this book, when he returned to England, bringing with him presses, type, printers, and bookbinders, and finished the work in 1539. Henry the Eighth had many books bound in velvet, with gold bosses and ornaments, and in his reign the stamping of tools in gold appears to have been introduced. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth some exquisite bindings were done by embroidery; the queen herself used to work the covers with gold and silver thread, spangles, &c. Count Grolier seems to have been a great patron of the art on the continent, and all his books were bound in smooth morocco or calf, ornamented with gold.

The style of the books of Maioli was very similar to that of Grolier or those of Diana of Poitiers, the specimens done for her being among the finest ever produced, and were no doubt designed by Petit Bernard. Roger Paine was the first Englishman who produced a really good binding, and some of his best works, such as French romances, were powdered with the fleur-de-lis. His books on chivalry had suitable ornaments; on poetical works he used a simple lyre, and carried the emblematical style of binding as far as emblems ought to be used. The following bill of his for binding a work is a curiosity, and shews how moderately he charged:—

Vaneri produm Rusticum Parisiis, MDCCLXXV.

Bound in the very best manner, in the finest green morocco, the back lined with red morocco; fine drawing-paper, and very neat morocco joints inside; and there was a few leaves stained at the fore-edge, which is washed and cleaned 0 0 6

The subject of the book being Rusticum, I have ventured to put the Vine Wreath on it. I hope I have not bound it in too rich a manner for the Book: it takes up a great deal of time to do these vine wreaths. I guess within time I am certain of measuring and working the different and various small tools required to fill up the vine wreath, that it takes very near three days work in finishing the two sides only of the book; but I wished to do my best for the work, and at the same time I cannot expect to charge a full and proper price for the work, and hope that the price will not only be found reasonable but cheap 0 18 6

The author, after alluding to the numerous specimens of modern bindings which have of late been produced to the public, and regretting their want of originality, concluded by urging the necessity of attempting something original, and suitable to the advancing and improving taste of the time. Then we may hope, that ere long ornamental art in bookbinding will be welded to our present perfect execution, and that the nineteenth century will be able, like the fifteenth century, to boast of a style of its own.

Mr. Henry Cole, assistant keeper of the Public Records, exhibited a number of very curious and beautiful specimens, among which was one of Henry the Seventh's time, containing the deeds relating to Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster, and in which the monks undertook to pray for the soul of the king, as its founder, as long as the world is.

DISREGARD OF CITY ANTIQUITIES.

At a meeting of the British Archaeological Association on the 12th instant, amongst various interesting matters brought forward, Mr. Roach-Smith announced the discovery of Roman remains in Lad-lane, opposite Pickford's warehouse, which, he said, were connected with a building of considerable extent, which occupied the site of that portion of the street, a part of Wood-street and St. Michael's Church. The excavations recently carried on had cut through about 30 feet of a tessellated pavement, but the apathy and something worse which existed in the court of common council towards the antiquities of the city, rendered such discoveries comparatively useless. On a former occasion he had hoped to have preserved for a museum, which it had been proclaimed, was to have been established in the Guildhall, an interesting fragment of coloured tessellated pavement found near St. Michael's Church; but, although he obtained the ready co-operation of the town-clerk and the comptroller, their combined efforts were not sufficient to resist a counteracting influence. It would seem it could not be removed to the Guildhall without some further sanction, for upon the matter being brought before a gentleman of power in the Board of City Improvements, he declined going to inspect the pavement, and summarily ordered it to be brought before him, in compliance with which fiat the pavement was shattered in a thousand pieces.

Mr. Price gave an account of discoveries made a few years since upon this site, and said he himself witnessed the destruction of a curious pavement opposite that under consideration. He stood by and saw it wretchedly cut to pieces, and he did not hesitate to say that the reason alleged for its rapid destruction was

to prevent, as much as possible, the researches of Mr. Roach-Smith.

The chairman (Mr. Pettigrew) said it was perfectly disgusting to hear of these continual acts of destruction, especially while attempts were being made in certain quarters, to exhibit on the part of the city authorities a show of feeling for the works of art in the ancient city, which feeling they evidently did not possess. There was also an everlasting talk about the City Museum, while the objects which alone could form such an institution, were ruthlessly neglected and destroyed. He was in hopes their colleague, Mr. Alderman Johnson, would exert his influence to induce a regard for the works of ancient art which illustrated the history of the city of London.

Mr. Jordan said that if the details of the acts of destruction alluded to were drawn up, he would ensure the case being represented in the proper quarter, so as to secure redress or public reprobation.

CARPENTERS' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.

A SUCCESSFUL meeting of carpenters was held on Tuesday night, at the Bell Inn, Old Bailey, for the purpose of adopting rules, previous to enrolment, for a Benevolent Institution, for the support of aged and infirm carpenters, and the erection of an asylum for the reception of members and their wives. Mr. Walsbury was called to the chair.

The chairman regretted that none one more efficient than himself had not been called to the chair, and better calculated to discharge its duties. At the same time he could assure the meeting that no one felt greater anxiety to carry out the object they had met to promote, and he hoped they would give every one a fair and impartial hearing, and discuss the merits of every proposition, no matter by whom brought forward.

The secretary (Mr. Bush), on the part of the committee, reported that they had waited on the different societies, and the universal opinion was, that such an institution had been long since required, and they would give it their support. The secretary then read the proposed rules, which were afterwards put *seriatim* from the chair. The rules provide that any carpenter, on subscribing six shillings annually, shall become a member, and be entitled to vote at all general meetings. A like privilege is conferred on donors of ten guineas, and subscribers annually of one guinea, payable in advance. Any member, incapacitated by old age or infirmity from following his employment, may become a candidate for the benefits of the institution, and on his election will receive 10s. per week from the funds until provided for in an asylum; and on the death of a member receiving relief (if married) the board of directors are empowered to assist the widow according as circumstances may require.

The rules up to No. 14 were discussed, and passed with a few verbal amendments. Mr. Aygate thought it was a great reproach to the carpenters of London, that while nearly every other trade had their almshouses, they, who were so actively engaged in erecting them, even from the time of staking out the ground to their completion, should have no place of their own. The meeting then adjourned to Tuesday next.

BUILDING ON A QUICKSAND.—A fine large house, says the *New York Journal of Commerce*, has just been built on the corner of the yard of Columbia College. In digging for the foundation, the earth proved to be a mere quicksand, with no cohesion at all between the particles, and it caved in from far into both streets. The foundation was, nevertheless, laid; but, as the house went up, the cellar wall moved down, a little and a little more, but not enough to produce absolute discouragement to our go-a-head bricklayers, until the building had gone up six stories above the ground, with one or two below the surface. Then, when the cornices had been put on and the rafters raised, it became apparent that the house would not be safe, and the melancholy order was given to take it all down again. Men are now employed in bringing down the bricks which they had carried up with so much toil, and very soon there will not be one brick left upon another!